



**OPEN PLAN OFFICE
DESIGN POLICY
GUIDELINES**

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INTRODUCTION

The nature of work is changing, supported by the steady advancement of new technologies. This is impacting upon the ways the physical work environment is being designed and used by its occupants.

A series of studies have been recently completed showing strong trends towards:

- an increase in the creation of spaces for collaborative work as the percentage of time staff work collaboratively, increases;
- an increase in non traditional work modes such as working from home, hot desking or hotelling, as new technology and ways of operating business supports these practices.
- decreases in the amount of workspace allocated to individuals in part due to the above and the advancements in technology reducing storage requirements.

Providing work environments which improve the efficiency and effectiveness of work being done, and assist to attract and retain staff adds value to an organization. The range of roles or activities which make up the contemporary office is increasingly varied and providing a wider range of work settings better support for concentrated or collaborative working thereby assisting productivity.

It is increasingly recognised that office design which permits and stimulates individual choice and invention within the office environment empowers the users, increases satisfaction and sense of being valued (1997, Duffy). This flexibility also addresses the increasingly rapid speed with which the way we work changes and promotes 'space use intensification'. Buildings need to be strategically planned to accommodate change to improve the life span of the fit out and the satisfaction of the users.

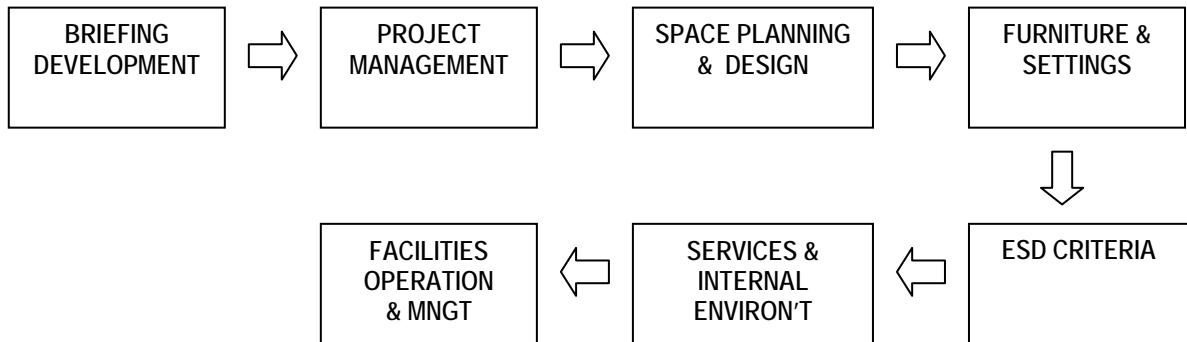
These are guidelines only, which are not intended to be prescriptive, but rather forms a catalyst to allow the function, use and desired work environment to inspire an inventive design solution, which significantly improves the workplace and provides a stimulating office environment.

GENERAL AIMS/ OBJECTIVES OF THE OPEN PLAN POLICY

- Provide a framework for the design and delivery of function based open plan office design.
- Encourage innovative design solutions to address the complex matrix of users functions.
- Assist in change management where staff are to be accommodated in a new manner.
- Provide a trigger for development to avoid shared support spaces being utilised for storage or offices and thereby undermining the functionality of the design.
- Promote collegiality in the workplace design encouraging staff to work on campus, to exchange and disseminate knowledge.
- Recognise the design of the space as an investment, significantly this is a work environment which contributes to the productivity of the people involved.
- Carefully consider briefing requirements as they form the basis for the design of the project and will also provide the parameters for the physical work environment.
- Well designed open plan office space offers better use of space, enhanced flexibility and a more collaborative workplace
- Create a flowchart which addresses the briefing process, outlines initial and ongoing communication of the design development from the Design team to the users, and provides a check list of functional requirements to be considered in light of the specific requirements of the users and the constraints of the building.
- Create a mechanism whereby Post Occupancy Evaluations are carried out and lessons learnt can be incorporated back into the policy document.
- Recognise systematic planning of new facilities to accommodate change (ie. future proofing buildings) to minimise the cost of churn.
- Encourage projects to set ESD goals to deliver office fitouts *which achieve a minimum 4 Green Star rating progressively improving to 6 stars over the next 6 years.*

PROJECT FLOWCHART - SUMMARY

This summary of the development of the project may contain prompts on the communication between the project manager, the user representative, the users and the consultant design team. More detailed checklists are outlined under each heading in the following sections.



BRIEFING DEVELOPMENT

The following notes/ checklists could be referenced into the above flow chart.

Statement of need

- What are the objectives of the project?
Eg. To upgrade an outdated facility; to provide space for a rapidly growing department which has outgrown the existing facilities; to improve the space efficiency and functionality of the accommodation; etc
- Provide project aspirations as part of the brief, perhaps consider a description of the vision for the desired outcome (for example is it open, non-hierarchical, vibrant, passive, interactive, subdued, corporate, creative etc).
Be prepared to experiment, avoid outmoded stereotypes which no longer serve intended purpose.
- How does the department/ group perceive themselves and the image which they wish to project within the department and to outside parties?
Eg. Staff are valued and it is important they are provided with a space which is pleasant to be in but also functions effectively. The team is cohesive and collaborative, and progressing cutting edge research and we wish to convey this success to our clients. Or, we are accessible, friendly and always here to help.
- What are the core competencies upon which the success of the department/ user groups depends?
This may reinforce the above statements.

Accommodation

- Where will the new facility be accommodated?
 - Within an existing building
 - Within a new building
 - Existing accommodation being refurbished
- Ensure the space is appropriate for intended use
- How much space is available? – is this adequate, does it have appropriate relationships to other facilities, to the public?

Project program & budget

- Allow sufficient planning and space allocation to provide for anticipated future requirements.
- What is the life expectancy of the accommodation? What is the expected churn rate of the fit-out?
- What is the procurement system?

- What is the timeline for delivery
- Allow sufficient time for project including brief development and design stages
- Is staged work required, is decanting required, is temporary accommodation required
- selection and appointment of consultants
- The project budget.

In establishing cost and budget expectations be realistic, seek cost advice early in the process.

Detailed briefing

- Staff numbers currently and 3 year forecast
- Staff roles and occupancy, predicted roles of staff in growth areas
- Approximate percentage of time at workstation and what times of the day.
 - Approximate time teaching, working from home, working remotely
 - Working/operation parameters - 24/7/365 operation, normal work periods. Consider actual time spent within office environment.
 - Approximate percentage of time working collaboratively within the work team/department
 - Prediction of how this may change in the next 3-5 years
- The space requirements for each role
 - layout/desk space
 - numbers/size of computer or other specialist electronic equipment
 - immediate storage accessed daily filing draw, lever arch files, stationery
 - storage requirements accessed less frequently, including shared resources, archival stores
 - more than one person at the desk to view computer/ files/ drawings
 - meeting requirements including, size of groups, privacy required and resources required to be accessed in these meetings. Are the meetings at appointed times or spontaneous?
 - perceived level of visual and acoustic privacy required. Level of quiet required to work.
 - Prediction of how this may change in the next 3-5 years
- Work group or team functional relationship diagrams
 - One or a series of bubble diagrams showing each team member and their functional relationships to other team members and shared resources.
 - The relationship of the department or teams to other departments, to the public, to students
- Shared support spaces required
 - Reception
 - Reception lounge
 - Printing, copying, faxing
 - Libraries
 - Areas for display
 - Kitchenette, plus common area for eating and drinking
 - Meeting rooms
 - Small meeting tables within the office for informal/ spontaneous collaboration
 - Filing banks
- Are there any procedural protocols that need to be considered

PROJECT MANAGEMENT

Project management issues

- communication channels to be clearly identified
- briefing process to address the items noted in Briefing Development.
- progress review
- consultant team selection and appointment
- value management and cost control
- project budget

Bench marking

- A benchmark exercise should be undertaken of similar facilities to learn and improve current design, this often involves visiting similar (and in some cases dissimilar) workplaces or environments.
- operating costs /sqm, operating costs / FTE, churn rate or costs

"Room for thought: a study of office use in Australia" found that organizations which had a space use strategy and measured operational benchmarks averaged 10% increased density over organizations which did not employ these strategies.

SPACE PLANNING & DESIGN

Building Skin and Enclosure

- Designing the building shell and skin to reduce the amount of energy required to service the building, plus the servicing itself down to the selection of light fittings can produce significant on going savings for an organization.

Area Allocation

- average square metres per full time equivalent (FTE) staff to usable floor area = 14 UFA m²/FTE (approximately equivalent to 16 m²/NLA)

This figure is to be used to form the initial strategic program and can also be used as a trigger for departments to consider redevelopment to avoid over populating and undermining the workability of a facility. Area allocation to individual workstations may differ due to project specific circumstances.

Future Proofing & flexibility: design for expansion

- Allow sufficient planning and space allocation to provide for anticipated future requirements. Consider future flexibility during the design stages to ensure the space can be adapted and modified.
- Examine strategies required to either divide spaces and/or open into combined space?
- Design with future expansion in mind
- Diversity of spaces that can be adapted to suit a number of differing configurations and uses

Functional relationships & collocation

- Consider functional relationships and the layout of offices and workstations, other support facilities and equipment
- Consider accessibility for visitors/students
- Consider interaction and break out spaces which often augment circulation and corridor spaces, offering other incidental use of the space.
- Consider planning requirements for links to adjacent buildings
- consider flexibility of space usage to avoid the space being empty for long periods, consider collocation of dual functions for spaces not occupied full time.

Space planning & circulation

- Zone functions to avoid disruption due to conflicting acoustic and functional requirements, for example adequately segregate noisy functions (eg common facilities, kitchen, resource areas) from quieter non-related functions.
- ease of mobility, circulation and ease of having their work stations located near co-workers
- layout circulation patterns, disturbed / undisturbed by office traffic
- occupational density

Support Spaces

- Provide a variety of support spaces which compliment and supplement the user brief. It is important the brief identifies adequate support space such as meeting rooms, storage, common utility facilities (printers, photocopying etc), filing space, common library

- Consider shared facilities which are common to a number of users (eg filing, library resources etc) and where they are best located

Acoustics

- Acoustic performance is paramount to the success of open plan office spaces.
- High performance acoustic ceiling tiles and selection of absorptive workstation dividers maybe worth the investment to reduce noise disruption in the open plan spaces.
- Meeting rooms and similar type functions need to provide adequate acoustic privacy.

Privacy & security

- Consider appropriate levels of privacy, both visual and acoustical
- Whilst privacy is required for some functions, open interaction is desired for others. This may effect the ambiance of the spaces created
- Consider levels of transparency which tend to break down hierarchical models of individual offices with limited physical and visual access
- Consider acoustic requirements for private spaces
- In open plan environments, consider partition heights which provide adequate privacy but still allow an open environment.
- Consider seating directions (eg facing away from or toward circulation paths)
- Consider location of screen for screen based activities
- Security of belongings

Amenity

- consider the layout to address users:
 - Access to natural light
 - Access to views
 - Access to spaces with natural ventilation
 - Access to outdoor break out space
 - Control of individual's space by
 - Task lighting
 - Temperature control
 - Flexible furniture, mobile equipment

Aesthetics

- physical appearance and design approach to project
- consider the image the facility wish to convey
- colour selection
- material selection

FURNITURE AND SETTINGS

Workstation Design

- Ensure adequate layout space.
- Does everyone need a workstation or can shared hot desks be adopted?
- An important consideration is cable management, how cables are concealed and how they can be modified to suit future alterations
- Consider future reuse, disassembly and manufacturer take back for recycling purposes

Storage and utilities

- Consider adequate storage needs including provision for anticipated future needs
- Are there any projection needs, display or information kiosks required?

Furniture

- Consider types of loose furniture, chairs, whiteboards, pin boards, mobile under bench units, filing drawers or filing banks, visitors chairs.
- Consider dual purpose furniture, for example a whiteboard acts as a bookcase door, a pin board acts as a surface to a wall, dividing partition or rear face of freestanding bookcases
- Are blinds required either for glare control or privacy?
- Provide adequate layout and bench space where applicable
- Informal meeting space consisting small casual work tables for spontaneous 'in house' collaboration, there should be approximately one 4 person area per 12 staff

Ergonomics

- Review occupational ergonomics of workplace and tasks

Flexibility

- Design with flexibility in mind and communicate strategies for future alteration and expansion

Opportunities to personalise

- Personalised workstations vs. standard workstation design

Technology

- laptops have not been adopted with the speed expected although predictions are their use shall increase in the future allowing for greater flexibility in the use of space

Computers and other personal electronic equipment are generally obsolete and usually replaced in 3 years. Utilising a modular furniture system that can be rearranged to accommodate changes in roles, functions, and team sizes will help reduce the cost of churn. There are furniture systems which 'organise' cables and electrical equipment and offer opportunities to provide task lighting that assist with the amenity of the space.

ESD CRITERIA

ESD criteria for consideration:

- Material selection
 - Embodied energy use
 - High recycled material content
 - Reduction in material use (reduce density / dematerialisation)
- Indoor environment
- Management systems
 - Churn management
 - Waste
 - Cultural change
 - User guide manual (how to use the space)
- Life Cycle / cradle to cradle
 - Innovation
 - Reuse
 - Recyclability
 - Disassembly
 - Manufacture take back at end of life

Materials selection

Material Selection for Environmental Sustainability

- ISO14001 accreditation or equivalent
- Sourced from timber certified sustainable sources
- Recycled content

- Energy use
- Indoor/outdoor air quality
- Reduction in material use
- Life cycle
- Recycling and re-use: Is exist furniture being re-used or is new furniture required. The re-use of existing furniture is a more sustainable approach however may not suit functional requirements.

BUILDING SERVICES AND INTERNAL ENVIRONMENT

Mechanical airconditioning

- consider: possibility of some user control, energy consumption (maybe addressed with building skin design/ modifications), ability to zone areas for natural ventilation at appropriate times of the year.
- Air quality
- Temperature levels and zoning options

Lighting

- consider: user control of task lighting, energy consumption and lifespan of fittings, flexibility, glare, ability to dim, natural daylight

Electrical power / Communications

- Provide network and power outlets in meeting rooms, tea rooms and other shared spaces.
- Review any special equipment which requires particular controls, power etc

Service Plant

- Provide adequate space for service plant which includes computer servers.

Flexibility

- The method of service distribution should consider ease of day to day modifications and long term flexibility to reduce the cost of churn.
- Consider ongoing and future accessibility to plant
- Identify a building services strategy for co-ordination of building services

FACILITIES OPERATION & MANAGEMENT

Change management

- how is the area to be managed?
- are there any protocols that need to be followed?
- conflict resolution
- provide an appropriate mix of spaces to support a change in workplace – eg resource room, kitchenette, meeting spaces, break out space etc

Post occupancy management

- The ongoing management of the space is critical to the success of the workplace. Maintenance and management of the space is essential to avoid spaces being used not as intended and therefore become dysfunctional, overcrowded and no longer suit their intended purpose.
- In conjunction with the management of the workplace consider changing the layout of the space on a regular basis. This may change the work environment, reveal unintended yet stimulating work environments.

Occupancy user guide and maintenance

- Provision of a user guide or manual should be provided to inform the occupants of the intent of the open plan office spaces. This should outline the philosophy of the space, flexibility, how the space was intended to be used, future expansion, storage strategy, services strategy etc.
- maintainability and housekeeping

Post occupancy evaluation

- Post occupancy evaluation should be conducted approximately 12 months after completion to evaluate the outcomes of the project. Similarly, prior to commencement during the briefing process, previous post occupancy reports should be reviewed.

REFERENCES

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